

THE GOLDEN AGE OF GREECE

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MENTOR GRAVURES

GREEK GIRLS
PLAYING BALL

By Sir Frederick Leighton

A GREEK FAMILY
GROUP

SOPHOCLES



An Ancient Goldsmith



MENTOR GRAVURES

SAPPHO

By L. Alma-Tadema

A READING FROM
HOMER

By L. Alma-Tadema

AN ATHENIAN
WOMAN



THE MENTOR · DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY SERIAL NUMBER 101

ON January 26, 1914, we journeyed with The Mentor to Athens, to wander for an hour or two among its venerable ruins. Today we seek a nearer view of the social life of Greece in her Golden Age. In imagination, therefore, we pass backward through time to ancient Athens, as she stood twenty-five centuries ago, near the close of the Age of Pericles. We carry with us a letter of introduction which secures the courteous attention of an intelligent young Athenian, Calippus.

Though he belongs to the nobility, as do all prominent men of his Age, his ideas and sympathies are broad and liberal. He readily consents to guide us through the city and to interpret for us the spirit of his Age. He is of medium height, thin, and wiry; from childhood he has exercised himself continually in running, wrestling, and other athletic sports, and has won many a footrace in the local festivals. As he belongs to the knightly class, obliged to serve in the cavalry, he began in youth to practise riding bareback up and down the mountainsides when hunting hares, or in pursuit of wolves that, in spite of every effort to exterminate them, still pester the flocks in lonely places. Like every other Athenian, he has had his experience at sea. He can take an oar in need and is thoroughly

competent to command one of the four hundred war galleys that assure to his country the supremacy over all the waters from Phenicia and the Crimea to Syracuse and Carthage. Greece is a nation of seamen, and the greatest pride of the plain citizen is in his skill at the oar.

In appearance our Calippus is much like his fellow knights; but the serious-minded young man instinctively refrains from the extreme fopperies of his class, such as wearing long hair and dressing in brilliant reds and purples. Fluffy dark-brown curls cover his head and neck and border his high forehead. His eyes are blue, his nose is straight, his beard pointed. Few Athenians of this period shave their faces; and though the majority are dark-complexioned, the type of Calippus is the ideal of manly beauty. He wears a short white tunic nearly reaching the knee; over his shoulders he drapes a mantle, all white save for the purple border. The seriousness of his bearing is relieved by a vivacity of expression and action. Thought, word, and deed speed after one another like nimble arrows from a swift-delivering bow.

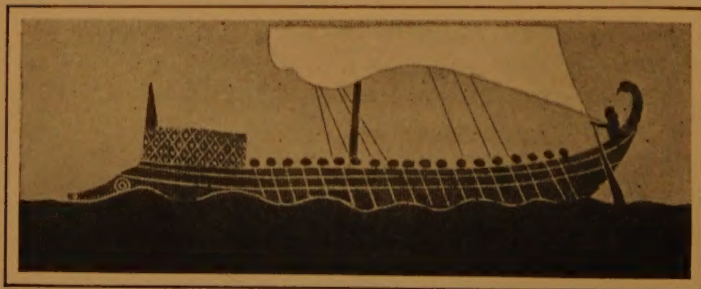
"The fundamental principle of our life," he explained, "is equality before the law and a place in the state according to a man's personal deserts, irrespective of rank and wealth. My own class maintains its leadership in no other way than by cultivating high ideals of justice and kindness in our dealings with our fellow-citizens and of devotion to the State. To do our duty is our only holiday.

TYPES OF ATHENIANS

"See these two men whom we are about to pass here in the street, both dressed alike in short woolen tunics. The older man is Pheidon, a coppersmith. I often drop into his shop to talk politics with him. Though but a mechanic, he is deeply interested in public affairs. He has held several administrative offices; he attends punctually every meeting of the assembly on the Pnyx; and no one is keener at analyzing and estimating the speeches of Cleon and Pericles than he. My class of nobles is on its last political legs, and in another generation men like Pheidon will sway the assembly and lead our fleets and armies.



A TROOPER ABOUT TO MOUNT
HIS HORSE



A SHIP WITH ONE BANK OF OARS

"During the year we hold forty stated assemblies, in which all the citizens who desire may meet to deliberate and to vote on matters of public interest. The decision is binding unless



THE ACROPOLIS, ATHENS, RESTORED

declared unconstitutional by the court, which is also a body of plain citizens. In other words, the people govern themselves.

"The man by Pheidon's side is Phormion, a slave. His family has been in this country for a hundred years, and you could not distinguish him from an Athenian. He pays his master so much a month, and has his time free. He is a skilled goldsmith and has just set up a shop for himself. When convenient, he will buy his freedom. There are others of his class far less fortunate; but we all treat our slaves well. One who is abused may take refuge at the shrine of Theseus. In our walk we shall soon come in sight of this little sanctuary, just north of the Acropolis. When Theseus was living among us, four hundred years ago, he always worked and fought for the protection of the poor and the lowly; and now his mighty spirit watches over the submerged class. The law permits the torture of slaves for extracting evidence at court; but no master would give up his servant for the purpose, since, if we mistreat them, God will cease to regard us with kindly eye."

As he was thus talking, we passed the two men and paused before a dwelling somewhat better than its neighbors. "This," he explained, "is the city home of Cephalus, who came to us from Syracuse a year or two ago on the invitation of Pericles. He has another dwelling-house and a factory at Peiræus, our port town, four and a half miles distant. He belonged to the most intelligent and cultured class in Syracuse; but Pericles offered him great inducements to come here and establish his armor plant. He is one of the most famous manufacturers of weapons in Hellas."

"I thought," one of our party interposed, "that Pericles gave his whole attention enthusiastically to temples and sculptures."



THE STEPS OF THE BEMA ON THE PNYX

plied to preparations for the impending conflict. As for enthusiasm, Pericles has it deep in his heart; though none but his most intimate friends ever discover it. On the surface he is cold and calculating and aims to make the State strong by careful attention to all its parts. At the port of Peiræus you may see our galleys and our new stone wharves, and great arsenals rapidly filling with munitions from the factories of Cephalus and other men of this occupation."

"Is Cephalus a citizen?"

"No: we give the citizenship to an alien in reward only for some great benefaction. But no man in this country is better protected than Cephalus, and few citizens have a higher standing in society. Indirectly he wields great influence on public affairs. The men of Peiræus, foreign residents and native industrials, constitute a hotbed of militarism. They believe that war and conquest will greatly enlarge their opportunity for money-making."

"Is money-making the supreme end of Athenian life?"

"Only of that small class. One or two of my own class are buying up hundreds of slaves to let out to contractors of our silver mines. The State owns the mines, and receives from contractors a twenty-fourth of the gross proceeds, in addition to a lump sum paid at the signing of the contract. The labor is all in the hands of the slaves. It is unhealthful, and I am sorry for the slaves; but the work has to be done. Yet it does not seem to me quite the respectable thing for the Athenian noble to make money in that way. Our ideal is neither to increase, nor to diminish, our hereditary property,

"The works of peace and the creation of beauty," Calippus replied, "are undoubtedly his preferences; but he sees the cloud of war lowering from Peloponnese*. We must fight to maintain our naval supremacy. And therefore, where one drachma [about 18 cents] is spent on the works of peace, five or six must be ap-



A SHOEMAKER'S SHOP

*Peloponnese, Peloponnesus, is the broad peninsula terminating Greece on the south. At this time most of the Peloponnese, united in a league under the city of Sparta, were threatening war upon Athens.

to live moderately, and to give the greater part of our income for public purposes, the equipment of our war galleys, the expenses of our great religious festivals, and the training and dressing of our dramatic choruses. To benefit the State and our fellow-citizens, to walk uprightly, and to worship the gods reverently and in due form are the supreme objects of our existence."

These remarks were interspersed with digressions on the various buildings and monuments which we constantly passed. Meanwhile, noon was approaching, and the sun grew exceedingly hot: the brilliant light nearly blinded us. Calippus accordingly invited us to take luncheon and an hour or two of rest at his house. When on our way thither, our guide stopped abruptly before a cottage, on which a sign above the door indicated that the front room was a shoe-shop.

"Excuse me for a moment," said he. "I have an errand in here."

As he entered, I stepped to the door and looked in. A customer was



A GREEK ARMOR SHOP

In the new museum of the Palazzo dei Conservatori, Rome

standing on a low table, while the cobbler and his grown-up son measured his feet for a pair of boots. On the walls were suspended large pieces of leather, laces, cobbler's implements, and finished wares.

"I hope you are well, Andron," said Calippus. "Have you repaired my wife's slipper?"

"Here it is," replied the cobbler, handing

him a delicate little slipper with a golden buckle.

Shoe in hand, Calippus returned to the street, and, with a sign, called the servant who had been following at some distance in the rear. Taking the article, the slave again dropped respectfully behind us. It was not becoming to a well-bred Athenian to carry packages in the street.

ATHENIAN FAMILY LIFE

"My wife," explained Calippus, "was my cousin. We Athenians intermarry with our relatives so far as we can. As we are not money-makers, we like to keep our hereditary fortunes within the family. Then, too, our female relatives are the only women of our class whom we are permitted to meet. It was not so formerly; but in recent years the higher class in Athens has adopted the Ionian custom of segregating the sexes. As we passed through the market did you notice those women and girls at the crockery, ribbon, and fruit and flower booths? They are of the



THE VESTIBULE OF A GREEK HOUSE

industrial class, and are free to go and come, to court and be courted. But my wife, before and after marriage, has never gone out unless accompanied by one or two slave women. She has many interesting friends among the ladies of her age. They invite one another to luncheon; they attend the women's festivals and most of the great public festivals. Tomorrow my wife will go to the theater to see the new plays of Sophocles."

Here a young lady in our party insisted on learning more about Athenian courtship and matrimony.

"When near kinsfolk dine together, the women are always present. In this way my cousin Isodice and I saw each other often, and became very fond of each other. It is generally the case, however, that the young folk never see each other before marriage, unless by a stolen glance at a festival or funeral. My friend Magacles thus caught sight of a young lady whom he greatly admired. Discovering where she lived, he watched her house from behind some plane trees in the public square. Luckily one day he saw her peep from an upper window. Their eyes met, and from that time forth there ensued much mutual peeping. Recourse was had to a professional matchmaker, and they are now happily married. When the parents of the two young people are acquainted, however, there is no need of a marriage broker."

"Doesn't the young lady have something to say about it?" the interested tourist interposed.

"No," replied Calippus. "A girl of fifteen is considered too young and inexperienced to form an opinion about such weighty matters."

While thus conversing, we made our way through the residence quarter along the south of the Acropolis. The streets were narrow and crooked with neither sidewalk nor pavement. In places the mud was ankle deep, and everywhere, in utter disregard of health, was scattered decaying garbage. My friends constantly gave evidence of their surprise and disappointment in such expressions as, "Can this be really Athens?" To us it seemed, in fact, like the poor quarter of an oriental town.

AN ATHENIAN HOME

Halfway up the Muses' Hill we reached an open space, shaded by planes and elms, and bordered by a row of houses a trifle more elegant than the average.

"Here," said Calippus, "is my house. My father erected his rude cabin on this lot after the Persians had left the city in



A GIRL SPINNING

A GRECIAN FAN AND PARASOL



ruins a half century ago. It fell to decay and I rebuilt it on a larger plan just before my marriage." In front of the door stood a Hermes, a pillar terminating in a bearded head. It was the god who protected the house and all within. The vestibule was adorned with two marble columns, a rare thing in a private house of that age. The walls were of sun-dried brick, stuccoed and tinted pale blue.

"It is the idea of Pericles," our guide explained, "that our home life should be refined and cheerful; for happiness in an individual increases his public efficiency."

Before entering we rested for a moment under an elm to gain a complete and lasting impression of the delightful scene before us. At our feet lay an expanse of low-roofed cottages, with here and there an open space surrounding a little shrine. Beyond the walls were diminutive farms,

—gardens, we called them,—intensely cultivated, each with its dwelling and barns, with its vineyard and olive trees. To the southeast the valley stretched out to the sea, which glittered silverly in the brilliant light. In front, beyond



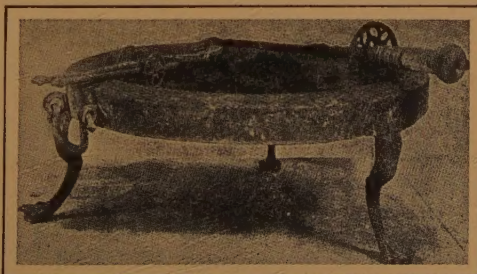
VARIOUS OCCUPATIONS OF WOMEN

the broad plain, rose the long range of Mount Hymettus, reaching upward through zones of cultivation, wood and pasture in succession to the bare gray rocks of the summit. "Our breakfast honey," Calippus remarked, "is made by the bees that keep company up there with the shepherd." To our left towered the Acropolis, the city's stronghold. Crowning the summit was the Parthenon, the splendid temple to Athena, now completed; and farther to the west the stone masons were putting the last touches on the Propylæa, the magnificent portal of the Acropolis. As Athens no longer needed a citadel for defense, this hill had become the dwelling-place of Athena and her associate divinities,—the abode in temple and sculpture of that absolute beauty which the human race has been able to create but once in all its history.

We passed through the vestibule into an open court. In the center was an altar to Household Zeus. Nearby stood a statue to this god and another to Ancestral Apollo, the two protecting deities of every



DOUBLE WINDOW



A BRAZIER



GREEK VASE

Athenian family. Raising his right hand before these statues, Calippus uttered a brief prayer: "Zeus and Apollo, and Athena in yonder temple on the Acropolis, to Athens grant glory; to the strangers within our gates, to my kin and countrymen, by land and sea, grant health and prosperity that standeth fast forever!"

The court was occupied by beds of flowers in varied bloom, separated by narrow walks. All around ran the portico, from which opened doors into the living and sleeping rooms.

"Where are the ladies?" one of our party inquired.

"There are only my wife and my younger sister," Calippus answered. "When the porter tells them that strangers are coming, they take refuge in the women's apartment yonder. They will be glad to receive the ladies of your party."

Equally ready to be received, our ladies willingly passed through the door to which he pointed.

They entered a general



GREEK VASE

living and working room for the free women and the servants. Isodice, seated to the left, was engaged in some kind of delicate embroidery stretched on a wooden frame, while, to the right, her sister-in-law, Iphigeneia, was making her toilet preparatory to going out. A slave girl was bringing her a jar of toilet cream. Whereas Isodice was a brunette, with oval face and gentle brown eyes, Iphigeneia, like her brother, was fair with blue eyes and great masses of golden hair. Both were types of rare beauty. Iphigeneia wore a saffron tunic that fell in abundant folds about her ankles; and, as she rose to depart, her maid draped about her graceful form a wrap of glowing scarlet.

They received their guests with warm courtesy. They talked vivaciously about their household affairs, their friends and social doings, and surprised the visitors by their intimate knowledge of politics.

"I was but fifteen," said Isodice, "when I was married, and knew only how to spin and weave and to exercise self-control. My husband taught me domestic economy. He has made it clear to me that we (he

and I) are partners in the property and income, and that the prosperity of the partnership depends upon me quite as much as upon him. From him I learned to nurse and doctor the sick slaves, and thus win their affection; to train them in their labors; to punish the ill doers and to reward the good. In our house and on our farm we produce nearly everything we need, so as to buy as little as possible. I attend to all the business connected with the house; and as Calippus is immersed in politics, helping and imitating Pericles, I usually look after the farm."

"Who works the farm for you?" asked one of the guests.

"We have a few slaves and some hired freemen. We sell charcoal, wine, olive oil, vegetables, and fruit. From our own sheep we produce all the cloth we need except a few fine textiles. In fact we are able to sell both cloth and mutton. The income is all that we need."

"You seem to carry great responsibilities."

"Yes; but it is better so. I remember when Calippus told me, in his encouraging way, that my greatest joy would be in making myself his superior and him my faithful follower; 'knowing no dread,' he added, 'lest, as the years advance, you should decline in honor in your household, but trusting that, though your hair turn gray, yet in proportion as you come to be a better helpmate to myself and to the children, a better guardian of our home, so will your honor increase throughout the household as mistress, wife, and mother, daily more dearly prized.'"

GYMNASIUM AND THEATER

The ladies were having so pleasant a time together that they refused to be separated till late that evening. Iphigeneia doffed her wraps, and sent her maid to cancel her engagement. As the sun declined toward the west, however, and a cool breeze came up from the sea, Calippus took the men of our party to the Lyceum, a gymnasium just outside the northeastern gate. The palæstra [wrestling place] belonging to this institution was an open court surrounded by a portico, across one end of

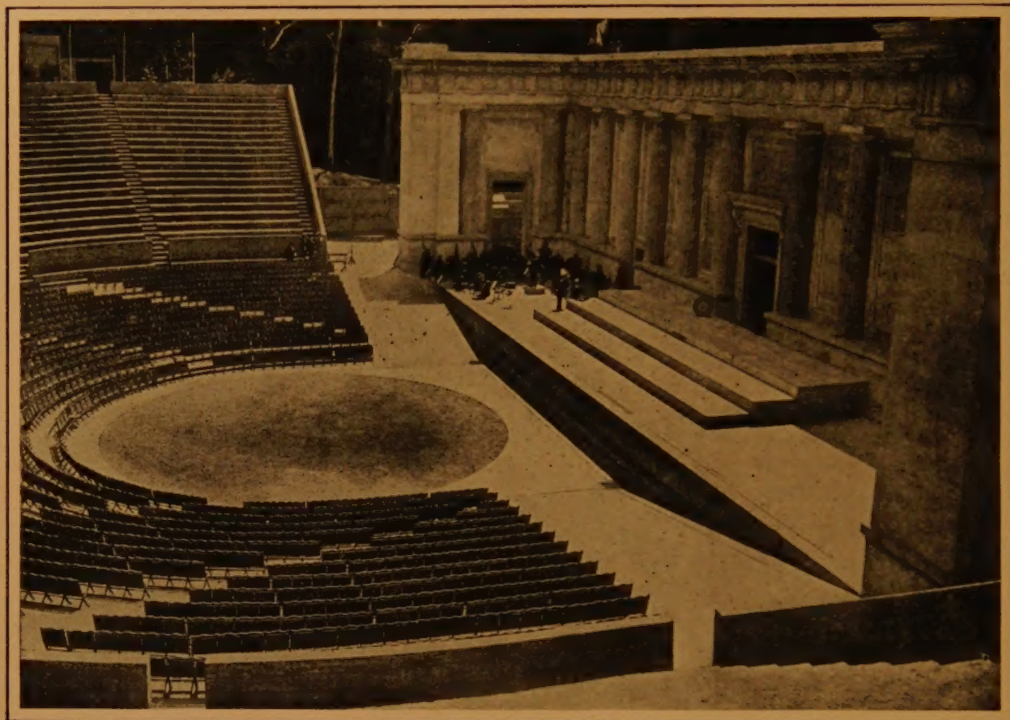


"SAPPHO"

In the National Museum, Naples, Italy



GREEK VASE



GREEK THEATER. At the University of California, Berkeley, California

which ran a series of dressing rooms. Here we met a great number of Athenians, boys and youths, and were introduced to many of them by our host, who seemed to know everybody by name. In the court was a marble fountain, with deliciously cool, clear water bubbling forth, and all around it the sandy floor on which the young men were wrestling and boxing. Outside the palæstra were shady grounds reaching down to the brook, Ilissus. Under the trees youths were throwing the discus and spear. Through a narrow valley a racetrack, stadium, had been measured off, 600 feet in length, and carefully leveled. Here a great throng of men and youths were gathered, and were seated on each side on the gently rising ground overlooking the stadium.

We arrived in time to see the famous race in armor. A group of youths in helmet and greaves and carrying round shields stood ready. At the word "Go!" they dashed forward, soon stringing out in a line, Lysiades taking the lead, followed closely by Callicles, cousin of Calippus. "It is a military exercise," our host explained. "With this same agility our youths rush into battle." As Lysiades now swung round the turn at the farther end of the stadium, he gave the goal a trifle too much room, while Callicles dashed in by his side, and on the home stretch gained a full foot on his competitor. The spectators raised a clamor of approbation.

Calippus ran down to embrace his victorious kinsman. "The best men in these competitions," he told us, "will take part in our games this sum-

mer in the great festival in honor of Athena, and the winners in those events will be sent to the Olympic Games next autumn."

The morrow found us seated in the theater. It was a hollow semicircle in the southern declivity of the Acropolis, filled with tiers of wooden benches. In our front was the orchestra—dancing place—back of which stood a building representing the palace of an ancient king. Three plays of Sophocles were scheduled. We enjoyed the singing and the rhythmic movement of the chorus, and admired the actors; but what filled us with amazement was the poet's wisdom in religion and morals, his knowledge of the individual, the family, the State, of all subjects with which mankind are concerned.

As we were especially interested in Athenian society, it was a pleasure to hear him tell of kin and family. The strongest of all ties, he declared, is that of blood to move men to compassion and helpfulness. Piety to kin is a higher law than obedience to the State, even as eternity surpasses the span of earthly life. The bond of affection and duty runs throughout the kin, constraining those of one blood to forgiveness of injury, to returning good for evil. The family is a sacred institution and a moral power. The ideal marriage is founded on love, a bond whose breaking ruptures life itself. Love is the greatest of conquerors, of destroyers; "It is a power enthroned beside the eternal laws!"

Love for our fellow men, thoughts meet for mortals, inviolate reverence for the Supreme Being, and wisdom, the chief part of happiness,—such are the lessons that Sophocles gave to his fellow beings. Those who have learned these lessons, he assures us, are loved of the powers above.



A WORKMAN DRESSED IN
THE TUNIC

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

A HISTORY OF GREECE

By George Willis Botsford

A brief general history with due attention to civilization.

LIFE IN ANCIENT ATHENS *By T. G. Tucker*

Interesting and reliable.

LIFE OF THE ANCIENT GREEKS

Somewhat more technical than the work mentioned above.

By C. B. Gulick

HOME LIFE OF THE ANCIENT GREEKS

By H. Blümner

An interesting treatment by a great authority

THE GREEK COMMONWEALTH

Social and public life and economy delightfully treated.

By A. E. Zimmern

ATHENS AND ITS MONUMENTS

Topography and buildings. *By C. H. Weller*

GREEK ATHLETIC SPORTS AND FESTIVALS

By E. N. Gardiner

The best treatment of the subject.

A SOURCE-BOOK OF ANCIENT HISTORY

By G. W. and L. S. Botsford

Selections from Greek writers illustrative of social and cultural conditions.

HELLENIC CIVILIZATION

By G. W. Botsford and E. G. Sihler

Selections from ancient sources illustrative of Greek civilization.

CHARICLES, OR ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE ANCIENT GREEKS,

with notes and illustrations. *By W. A. Becker*

* * Information concerning the above books may be had on application to the Editor of the Mentor.

In considering the Golden Age of Greece, we must not overlook a fascinating and aristocratic man about town, called Alcibiades. He was a typical young Athenian blood, an heir to great wealth,—which was increased by his marriage,—and a capricious, self-willed young man given to wild freaks and

reckless behavior. The hours sped fast when Alcibiades and his companions set the pace. It was only natural that he should be a spoiled child of the city, for aside from his wealth and personal beauty, he was a relative of Pericles, who was his guardian. The patronage of Pericles the Great was enough to give any young man in Athens the right of way, for it was largely due to Pericles—soldier, statesman, and brilliant patron of the arts—that the age in which he lived was called “The Golden Age.”

Alcibiades loved the stimulating life of Athens. In his gay, light-hearted youth the days and nights were full of adventure. There were no sensations unknown to him, no experiences untried, no cups untasted. His vanities, his love affairs, and his impious revels were notorious. And yet, like other young men of the day, he sought the philosophers and discussed the principles of justice, temperance, and virtue, with them. He was a friend of Socrates and admired him as a master mind. He listened to his words and considered his wisdom—but went his own way.

★ ★ ★

Between Socrates and Alcibiades a mutual debt was incurred and paid. Each one saved the life of the other. The philosopher saved the young man's life in the battle of Potidaea. Alcibiades saved that of Socrates at the battle of Delium. These two men, strongly contrasted, should have meant more to each other. Socrates had a real affection for the hand-



THE TROJAN WOMEN. By Euripides
The play as presented in the stadium of the College of the City of New York

some young man. Alcibiades took Socrates seriously enough to feel ashamed of himself occasionally—but that was all. The gods had been most generous in their gifts to Alcibiades,—but they forgot to make him honest. And so his brilliant life was blasted by his own treachery

and deceit. His abilities were fully as great as his vices. When the pursuit of pleasure palled on him, he turned to serious things, and then his selfishness led him straight to an ignoble end.

★ ★ ★

One morning Athens was shocked by an outrageous act of vandalism. The night before the statues of Hermes throughout the city had been profanely mutilated. The names of the offenders have never become known, but the question “Who smote the marble gods of Greece?” has usually been answered by an accusing sentence involving Alcibiades and his gay companions. He asked boldly for an investigation, but he was obliged to set sail upon an expedition to Sicily, and when he was recalled to stand trial he escaped and made his way to Sparta. Then followed a period of treachery in Asia Minor, when he made an alliance with the Persian, Tissaphernes, and provoked the allies of Athens to revolt. Playing falsely back and forth, seeking at each moment his own self-interests, he finally returned to Athens, and was welcomed with unexpected enthusiasm—all apparently being forgiven. But his enemies were watching, his residence was set on fire, and as he ran out, dagger in hand, he was killed by a shower of arrows. And so Alcibiades died at the age of forty-six, brilliant and magnetic to the last, but superficial and self-seeking, and cursed with a capacity for deceit that was his whole undoing.

W. S. Moffat
EDITOR



AN ATHENIAN WOMAN

The Golden Age of Greece

AN ATHENIAN WOMAN

Monograph Number One in The Mentor Reading Course



AMONG the Greeks of the Age of Pericles the attitude toward women varied. Some regarded women as their inferiors, others as the equals, or even the superiors, of men, but differing in nature, and, therefore, in the sphere of their functions. Women were more restrained in the Age of Pericles than in earlier times; but they were considered a very valuable element of society, and, as such, they were highly respected.

Women were dependent in matters of law; but within their spheres, and most especially in domestic life, they managed business affairs.

Women had little instruction except that given by their mother and nurses. They were not allowed to meet men socially and had no great amount of companionship even with their fathers, brothers or husbands. Girls lived in seclusion until marriage. Even afterward, they had no such freedom as the women of today.

Married women, of course, had more liberty than their unmarried sisters; but it was considered unbecoming for a young wife to leave the house without her husband's knowledge. If her husband chose to exercise his rights, he could keep her in close confinement with no society save that of her female slaves. When a respectable woman did go out, she was always accompanied by one of her slaves as a companion. She visited friends and neighbors as well as kinswomen.

Such methods of treatment naturally made the Athenian girls bashful, and their modest manner was quite a contrast to that of the only Grecian state whose customs differed from them—Sparta; for the unmarried girls of Sparta were allowed to mingle with men.

The dress of a fashionable Athenian woman resembled somewhat that of the man. It consisted of the chiton, either in the style of the Doric, or the Ionic. The Doric was a very simple woolen garment. The Ionic chiton, on the other hand, was an ample garment falling in many folds down to the feet, with broad sleeves which varied in length. It was of linen or of similar material.

Another article of dress, the diploidion, was a kind of double mantle which was drawn on like a tunic. Women also wore a girdle.

Women's garments were made of linen, wool, cotton, flax and silk; and it is probable that silk garments were not used in Greece until a late period. Furs were not needed in Greece; but country laborers used to wear sheepskin.

White was the color worn most generally by Grecian women; but colored dresses were quite prevalent among them. The most popular colors were yellow, olive, green, azure and even bright gray. The chiton was decorated with various ornaments, such as horizontal borders, vertical stripes and embroidered figures.

Women wore no head covering with the exception of nets and certain forms of head dress.

There were many kinds of women's shoes. They were generally of leather. Sometimes cork formed a middle layer in the sole. To be properly dressed, it was essential that a woman should be neatly shod.



The Golden Age of Greece

THE GRECIAN FAMILY

Monograph Number Two in The Mentor Reading Course



HE customs of the ancient Greeks in the matter of courtship and marriage were so different from ours that it is difficult for us to comprehend them. Far back in the time of Homer, it was the custom of a man to buy his bride from her father; but at the time of Pericles, in the Golden Age, a dower was given with the bride.

Among the Greeks, marriage was seldom the result of love. This was due in great part, of course, to the fact that the men had so very little chance of meeting women. A match was usually arranged between the prospective bridegroom and the family of the bride.

Most marriages took place in the winter. The fourth day of the month was a favorite one for the wedding. Several solemnities preceded the ceremony. The most important was the sacrifice to the gods of marriage. Toward evening on the wedding-day the bride was taken by the bridegroom to his home in a carriage. This was drawn by mules and oxen, or by horses. In some cases, when the carriage arrived at its destination, the axle was burned. The bridegroom escorted home in this manner his first wife only. If he married again, the lady was brought to him by a relative or friend.

The wedding-procession was numerous and was preceded by torchbearers. Both bride and bridegroom were in festal attire and they wore chaplets of leaves or flowers.

In this way the procession moved along to music and song. All who met it poured forth congratulations and good wishes. On the arrival at the bridegroom's house, they were saluted with a shower of sweetmeats; and then followed the wedding-feast. At this feast, contrary to the custom in other cases, the women were allowed to be present. Afterward, the lady received presents from her husband, and both of them were presented with gifts from their relations and friends.

After marriage, the husband and wife took their meals together unless other men came to dine with the master of the house. When her husband was entertaining male guests, no woman would think, even in her own home, of participating in a meal.

The duties of the wife were the management of the entire household and the bringing up of the children. When the boys were placed under a master, her supervision ended; but she was in charge of the girls until they married. The women also had the superintendence of all meals and of the furniture, clothes, supplies and slaves. They also had entire charge, in times of sickness, not only of her husband and children, but also of the slaves. So we see that the women of Greece held a very responsible position in the household. They were quite the ruling power in the domestic sphere.

Very little familiarity existed between husband and wife. The man always felt that it was necessary in the presence of his wife to maintain dignity. He could not afford to do anything that might lose her respect and estimation.

Widows frequently married again. Sometimes this was due not to choice, but to the testamental wishes of their husbands.

GREEK GIRLS
PLAYING BALL
BY
SIR FREDERICK
LEIGHTON



The Golden Age of Greece

GRECIAN PASTIMES

Monograph Number Three in The Mentor Reading Course



HE gymnasium was probably one of the most important factors in the development of Greek life. In very ancient times physical strength predominated over intellectual activity. To the victors went the spoils; and the victors were those possessing physical superiority. It was natural, therefore, for nations to set high store on athletic prowess. While in the Golden Age of Greece the original intention of the exercises was still maintained, the gymnasium came to be looked upon also as a diversion: it had become a place of universal amusement.

In nearly all the Greek states there was a law forbidding women to be spectators at gymnastic games. And, of course, it was a most rare occasion when a member of the gentler sex took part as competitor. Women were allowed, however, to send carriages to be driven in the horse races.

Sparta was the only Greek state that departed from these customs. The maidens, as well as the youths, practised the exercises of the gymnasium. Married women were alone excluded from the competitions.

It will be interesting to look at the construction of a Grecian gymnasium and to see exactly how it was used. A gymnasium consisted of a large peristyle, which was made up of a court surrounded by pillars and many rooms for various purposes. On the southern end of the peristyle was the ephebeion, the largest of the exercising rooms. Nearby were other smaller rooms and the cold and warm baths. These took up one side of the peristyle. In the three other arcades were rooms furnished with seats for the accommodation of the philosophers, who came there to talk and debate. The main central open space of the peristyle was probably used for gymnasium exercises of various kinds.

All these gymnasiums were used by both the citizens and the professional athletes. Some authorities believe that the men and youths had separate gymnasiums; but this is not likely. To a great extent, the Grecians believed in educating both the mind and the body; and the boys that went to school in the morning had the use of the gymnasium in the afternoon.

The gymnasiums were also favorite places in which the wise men instructed their pupils, or engaged in intellectual conversation with their friends and colleagues.



RAPPHO

BY

L. ALMA-TADEMA

IN THE

WALTERS GALLERY

BALTIMORE, MD.

The Golden Age of Greece

SAPPHO

Monograph Number Four in The Mentor Reading Course



SAPPHO, the Greek poetess, belonged to an earlier age than that of Pericles; but she may be appropriately considered in the Golden Age of Greece. Her genius had its place there in the influence that it exerted during the finest period of Greek life.

Sappho was a native of Lesbos and lived some time during the seventh and sixth centuries B. C. Very little is known about her personal history.

Alcaeus, one of her contemporaries, was a native of Lesbos also. He belonged to a noble family; and his life was greatly mixed up with the political disputes and internal feuds of his native city. Because of political beliefs, he was forced to leave the country and spend a great deal of time in exile. Most of his poems were hymns to the gods, political poems and love songs.

Alcaeus wrote Sappho an ode, a fragment of which is preserved today, and which addresses the poetess as "Violet-crowned (or dark hair) pure, sweet-smiling Sappho."

We know that Sappho came of a good family because her brother, Larichus, was a public cup-bearer at Mytilene in Greece, a position for which it was necessary to be well born. Another brother, Charaxus, fell in love and squandered his property. To him Sappho wrote an ode in which she severely rebuked him.

There is a legend which tells of her vain love for the disdainful Phaon. He would have nothing to do with her; so finally she leaped into the sea from a promontory. However, the myth does not tell whether she died or not as a result of this.

It is believed that Sappho was exiled for political reasons; but this theory has no confirmation.

It has been said that she had a husband named Cercolas of Andros, and a daughter, Cleis. It has been claimed that she was not wicked, although legend, literature and art have celebrated her as a gifted and fascinating siren.

At Lesbos Sappho was the head of a poetic school in which young women composed songs and sang them. At that place poetry was cultivated as successfully by women as by men. In ancient Greece Sappho was as famous as Homer. She was called "The Poetess;" he, "The Poet." Many writers called her "the Tenth Muse," "the Flower of the Graces," and "a miracle." One poet wrote of her as "the beautiful;" he evidently referred to her writings and not her person; for she is said to have been small and dark, and not very attractive.

Her poems were arranged in nine books. She is said to have sung them accompanied by music. Every line is perfect and finished. She has a place among the best of the classic poets.



The Golden Age of Greece

THE GREEK THEATER

Monograph Number Five in The Mentor Reading Course



THE three great writers of tragedy in ancient Greece were Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Æschylus, in addition to being a great dramatist, was also a hero at the Greek victory of Marathon. He was a poet of the highest order and gained the prize for dramatic excellence thirteen times. Sophocles, who was called by his countrymen the "Bee of Attica," entered into competition with Æschylus and defeated him for first prize.

Next to Æschylus, Sophocles is considered the most skilful dramatist and the greatest of Greek tragic poets. He was born at Colonus, in the neighborhood of Athens, and lived from about 495 B. C. to 406 B. C. Sophocles was universally beloved. He is said to have written about one hundred plays, of which only seven have come down to us.

Euripides, the third of the great Greek dramatists, is ranked just below Æschylus and Sophocles. However, his dramas have been found to be more popular with posterity than those of either of the other two. His range of interest is very wide—we might say, almost Shakespearian.

The Greek theater at the time of Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides had its success and triumph in the devotion of the Greek religion to the ideals of beauty. For this reason the Greeks were faithful to the true principles of all art and of the final union of the arts of poetry, music and acting. The highest period of the Greek drama was during the Golden Age of Grecian life—the Age of Pericles. With the decline of the Athenian state, came the decline of the Greek drama and "the laughter of Aristophanes."

Let us glance into the interior of a Greek theater and see what went on there and how the spectators behaved. There has been some question as to whether women attended the Greek theater. There is no doubt that they attended the performance of tragedies.

Certain parts of the theater were assigned to certain classes. Women sat separate from the men. Performances began at a very early hour. Eating and drinking were permitted in the theater. Many, however, only sat out part of the performance, while others did not come until late, when the money taker had gone and they could get in for nothing.

In the age of Pericles the audience remained silent: there was neither applause, nor the opposite. Later Greek audiences showed their approbation, or disapproval, of the play, or the actors—sometimes in a very emphatic way.

Tragedies were listened to very gravely. The Athenians, who were easily moved to sympathy and pity, were deeply impressed by all tragic occurrences on the stage. In the comedies, on the other hand, the spectators were often requested to laugh and applaud. Many authors helped things along by throwing nuts and figs among the audience. On the whole, the Greek comic theater was quite a brisk and uproarious place.

A READING
FROM HOMER
BY
L. ALMA-TADEMA
In the
Collection of
George W. Elkins



A Reading from Homer

L. Alma-Tadema

The Golden Age of Greece

GREEK LITERATURE

Monograph Number Six in The Mentor Reading Course



THE ancient Greek literature falls into three periods: the early literature to about 475 B. C.; the Attic literature, 475 to 300 B. C.; and the literature of the Decadence, 300 B. C. to A. D. 529. We are most interested in the second of these periods,—the time of the Golden Age, with its tragic and comic drama and its historical, oratorical and philosophical prose.

Before this middle period of ancient Greek literature came the period of epic, elegiac (verse devoted to reflective and meditative moods), and lyric poetry. The most important epic poetry of the time was ascribed to Homer. It has never been decided exactly that Homer was a real man, or, if he was, that he wrote both the Iliad and the Odyssey. Seven places claimed to be the birthplace of the poet; and the one that had the best claim was Smyrna.

The ancient Greeks were almost unanimous in believing the Iliad and the Odyssey to be the work of one man. Some authorities believe that the poet lived about the tenth and eleventh centuries B. C., but Herodotus places him about 850 B. C. No one knew very much about him. He is supposed to have been blind. In addition to the two great epics, Homer is reputed to have written some hymns.

The poetry of Homer was very popular during the Golden Age. There was a law that it should be recited publicly at certain festivals; and those who recited the poems were called rhapsodists. Usually these rhapsodists did not use the accompaniment of the harp. They recited while beating time with a branch of laurel.

During the early period of Greek literature, in addition to the epic, we find a second meter, called the elegiac. Another popular form was lyric poetry. This poetry was written to be accompanied by music. The principal schools that practised it were the Æolian and the Dorian; and the poets Simonides and Pindar were its highest exponents.

The middle period of ancient Greek literature, the Attic period, contained the great dramatists Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Another writer was Aristophanes, who chose comedy rather than tragedy. He came forward as a comic poet about 427 B. C. and was popular for forty years. He had bold fancy, great humor, and much lyrical power. He wrote more than fifty comedies, eleven of which are known today. In some respects his humor is very modern. Some of his comedy material is still in use,—the mother-in-law joke, for example.

Herodotus, a master of Greek prose, was born in 484 B. C. He was a historical writer and took as his subject the struggle between Greece and Asia. Following him came Thucydides, a far more critical historian, and Xenophon. The strength of Xenophon consisted in his thorough combination of the practical soldier with the literary worker.

In Greek literature, the leader in oratorical prose was Demosthenes; the leaders in philosophical prose were Plato and Aristotle.

The third period of ancient Greek literature was the literature of the Decadence. This began with the extinction of free political life in the big cities. While the Greek commonwealths were independent and strong, the whole training of the man's character was relative to his membership in the state. Poetry, music, literature, and art were matters of public interest. But with the loss of freedom in political life, literature became decadent.